

To: Vermont House & Senate Agriculture Committees

From: Vermont Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council

Re: Act 83, relating to the slaughter of livestock on-farm for the use by the producer or by non-paying guests or employees

The Vermont Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council (LCSAC) wishes to bring its concerns relating to this Act to the Agriculture Committees of the Vermont House and Senate.

The United States Humane Methods of Slaughter Act requires that licensed slaughter establishments ensure that animals are insensitive to pain at the time that they are killed. Humane slaughter in these establishments is verified by trained state or federal inspectors. The process is tightly regulated, thereby ensuring that it is carried out according to state and federal laws that protect animal well-being. Additionally, each commercial slaughter establishment in Vermont is required to develop and adhere to a robust humane handling plan, which must be approved before license renewal. Act 83 does not address any issues of animal pain or distress, or ensure that livestock slaughtered on the farm under this exemption are handled humanely.

If the language in Act 83 is reopened, the LCSAC would like to provide testimony on the humane handling aspects of the law, or lack thereof. Of specific concern are the restraint of large animals immediately prior to slaughter and the method(s) used to render animals unconscious prior to shackling, hoisting or bleeding. Appropriate restraint facilities and methods are critical not only to minimize animal pain and distress, but also to protect personnel from inadvertent injury by large animals which are fearful and difficult to control. In addition, the Council would like to remind the Committees of the importance of our State's image as a producer of humanely-handled livestock; the Bushway incident of 2010 provides a graphic example of the repercussions when animals are not handled in a humane and ethical manner.

The Council wishes to provide testimony to the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture prior to the law's sunset date in 2016 if an opportunity to do the same does not arise sooner.

Regards,



Diane Bothfeld

Chair, Vermont Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council

On behalf of Council members:

Dr. Ruth Blauwiel

Jane Clifford

Carl Cushing

Greg Finch

Dr. Kent Henderson

Dr. Todd Pritchard

Tracy Simon

Marcy Wisnowski

Jessica Danyow

Dr. Kristin Haas

Leslie Pike

Paul Saenger

Melody Squier